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ABSTRACT

This document contains six papers relating to the teaching of English as a foreign language. The titles and authors are as follows: "The Fail-Safe Micro Research Paper" (Mary Anne Saunders); "Is Role Playing an Effective EFL Teaching Technique?" (Frances L. Smith); "Research on the Cloze Procedure of Reading Comprehension and Its Use in the EFL Classroom" (Wen-hui Li); "Reading in English as a Foreign Language: Some Recent Research" (Paula Kalaja); "Teaching to Enhance Acquisition of Pragmatic Competence" (Karen L. Marcum); and "Child vs. Adult in Second Language Acquisition: Some Reflections" (Rahela Banu). (MSE)

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THE FAIL-SAFE MICRO RESEARCH PAPER

Mary Anne Saunders
The George Washington University

For several years we assigned traditional research papers in our higher-intermediate level ESL classes at the George Washington University. This traditional approach involved assigning a 6-8 page research paper, with each student choosing a topic of interest to him/her.

Using this approach we received research papers full of problems: frequent incidents of plagiarism, unfocused topics, inappropriate sources and citations, "lost-babes-in-the-woods" library experiences, weak organization, lack of cohesion, poor or absent introductions and conclusions. In addition to these problems there were the expected grammatical inadequacies, creating a headache of correction for the teacher and a nightmare of revision for the student. The students themselves felt that they had worked excessively hard on an assignment that they did not quite understand and that lowered their grades somewhat. Their lasting impression was that research was confusing and frustrating.

Finally, out of the kind of desperation caused by writing the question "Are these your own words?" for the 1000th time in the margin of a student paper, we realized that our approach had to change. Initially, we decided to eliminate the research paper assignment altogether. We soon realized, however, that deletion was not the answer. Most of our students would be mainstreamed into their university courses the very next semester where they would be required to write research papers. We decided then that it was necessary to keep a research component but the teaching method needed re-evaluation. Since the most serious flaw of the traditional approach seemed to be the students' lack of success in producing an acceptable final product, we developed a modified research assignment, a "micro research paper," designed to guarantee success.

The key element of the modified research assignment became this guarantee of success, and the only way the students could achieve success was for the teachers to exercise control over most of the process. What these students really needed was a tour guide, leading them from the plane to the busses to the local sights, someone who knew the rules and regulations of this new country. Their analysis of what they "saw" was their own, but without their guide, they were not even getting on the right busses.

Below, I will present a chronological plan of action for the micro research project. I will also try to offer some suggestions for adaptation of the assignment to individual class needs. There is a great deal of room for flexibility in this unit even though it at first appears to be quite rigid.

CREATING AN AWARENESS OF CURRENT EVENTS AND CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES

From the beginning of the semester, before even mentioning the existence of the assignment, the teachers try to develop in the students an awareness, an interest if possible, in current events and controversial issues. Several times a week we begin class by discussing what appeared in the news the evening before. We have found that basing a ten or fifteen minute free-write assignment on the discussion is very helpful. Concentrating on current events rather than academic issues has proven to be successful, keeping in mind the reduced scope of the research project.

PRACTICING NECESSARY WRITING SKILLS

Since the micro research paper is actually an extended "Using Authority" exercise, the teachers lead up to it gradually by presenting or reviewing the basic elements of paragraph writing: the topic sentence, supporting sentences, transitional material, outlining, etc. Then, we move on to the elements of essay writing: the thesis statement and introduction, supporting paragraphs, transitional material, concluding paragraph. And the students will have been introduced to the fundamental rhetorical patterns: logical division/chronology/process, comparison/contrast, cause/effect, and the possibility of combinations of these patterns. We also cover the basic elements of a "Using Authority" exercise: the structures involved in reported speech, parenthetical documentation of the source material (following MLA guidelines), paraphrasing, summarizing. In terms of grammar we cover adjective and adverb clauses/phrases and nominals.

CHOOSING A TOPIC

After laying this initial foundation, the students should begin reading newspapers and magazines and watching the news on television in preparation for choosing a topic for their research assignment. They may begin by thinking of very broad topics such as drug abuse. The next step would be to narrow that topic to drug abuse among American teen-agers, for example. After having received some guidance in choosing and narrowing topics, all

students hand in their individually-chosen topics. At this point the teacher becomes a recorder, collecting the topics and writing them on the board. The impossible as well as the possible ones are included in order to guide the class to see what makes a topic manageable. A typical list of topics might read as follows:

1. Drug Abuse among American Teenagers
2. Alcohol Abuse among American Teenagers
3. Why (fill in blank) is the Only True Religion
4. Overpopulation in China
5. The Epidemic of Teenage Pregnancy in the U.S.
6. AIDS: God's Punishment for Sin
7. Child Abuse in the U.S.

After reminding the students that the paper will be only about three pages in length, we ask them to identify which topics need to be narrowed even further. The answer should be all of them. We then ask which of the topics are inappropriate for a research paper. The answer should be: the third and sixth topics because they are opinions, not topics for research. After erasing the inappropriate topics, we are left with the remaining areas of interest. At this point the students vote on which area of interest they will all concentrate on. It is almost always clear that there are really only two or three major areas of interest to the class. A lot of friendly but animated discussion goes on here, with students trying to convince others of the values of their own topics. We try to encourage this type of discussion.

It may be necessary to narrow the area ultimately chosen by the students. If, for example, the class has chosen "The Epidemic of Teenage Pregnancy in the U.S.," the teacher's task is to point out that there are many aspects to this epidemic: the causes, the effects on the mother, on the child, on society, the comparison with the teen pregnancy rate in other countries, etc. Another vote is taken on which direction the interst area should take. The new class topic is written on the board; for example, "The Main Causes for the Epidemic of Teenage Pregnancy in the U.S." This is now everyone's topic. Will the students accept the fact that there is only one topic for the entire class? When the reasons for the uniformity of the topic are explained, the students concur.

After the students have chosen the topic, we have found that having them do a ten minute free-write on what they know or assume about the subject is of considerable value, especially in encouraging the less articulate students to participate in preliminary disucssions. The students are told at this time to buy a file folder in which to keep all their papers and handouts for this assignment.

LOCATING SOURCES IN THE LIBRARY

The bulk of the next class meeting is spent at the library, looking for magazine and newspaper sources, since these are the most appropriate for current events topics.

At the library the students are divided into groups of two or three; perhaps one group to consult the Washington Post Index, another group the New York Times Index, others various recent editions of The Reader's Guide. We generally experience a bit of controlled chaos at this point. There are many stumbling blocks that the teacher must remove; for example, most of the students will never have used an index or The Reader's Guide before. They will have many questions about the abbreviations in these indexes. They will also want to know if the library has the magazines or journals cited in the Guide.

Occasionally, a class will choose a topic that cannot be researched because sources simply cannot be found in the library. In such a case, it is a worthwhile exercise for the students to see that it will be necessary to change their topic to one that is more researchable.

After approximately 20 or 30 minutes, each group of students should have the bibliographic information for four or five articles in hand. The students must be very careful that they have copied down exact information from the indexes and that they keep this information intact for future use.

Frequently, students choose sources that are not appropriate for their project. An article may not directly relate to the subject (titles can be misleading) or may be out of date. Careful explanation of why these articles are not appropriate is necessary. For example, following our topic on the reasons for the epidemic of pregnancies among American teenagers, an article entitled "Why the Abortion Rate is So High for D.C. Teens" might not be so relevant whereas the article entitled "Babies Having Babies" would be.

Now the task is to locate and reproduce the articles. Each student must then find and reproduce one article from the group list for the next class period. There should be no duplicates. At our library, perhaps at any library, there are not simple tasks.

There may be students going off in all directions - to the bound periodicals stacks, to the recent acquisitions section, to the microfilm and microfiche area, etc. How is the teacher to remain with each group?

Obviously, the teachers need to divide their time carefully. We occasionally find that graduate students in the class will have had some experience finding sources in their various countries. Although the system might be different, those students can often help with some of the location tasks, like finding bound periodicals in the stacks. If there are no graduate students, the teacher divides his/her time by spending a few minutes with each group, assisting the students with their initial problems; for instance, not knowing that the bound periodicals are arranged in alphabetical order, unfamiliarity with the microfilm and microfiche machines and copiers. Groups using the audio-visual equipment will always need more attention.

We remind each group of students that it is responsible for bringing three or four articles to class the next day, complete with correct bibliographic material, including all of the page numbers for the article, the volume number (if applicable), the complete and correctly spelled author's name, etc. We also remind them that if an article is more than one page long, they must reproduce all of the pages, a frequent, if mystifying, omission of our students.

At some point in the library session, the teacher should leave the students alone to help each other continue and complete their searches. The students gain confidence from doing a manageable segment of the search for sources themselves.

MAKING THE FINAL SELECTION OF ARTICLES

The next class session involves getting feedback from the students as to the problems that they experienced in the library and also entails collecting the articles. It is the teacher's responsibility to reproduce all of the relevant articles for the next class period, including their pertinent bibliographic material. Some of their choices of sources might be too long or too technical; for example, an article from a medical journal on difficulties in pregnancy for teenagers would not be comprehensible to a class doing a paper on teen pregnancy. If an article is obviously not appropriate, it is not duplicated for the class. If, however, some artiles are merely better written or contain more organized or more complete information than others, we duplicate both the best and the mediocre articles so that the students can see what is involved in a value judgment. We try to keep the longer first list of articles to no more than about eight or nine. If we try to use more, the project becomes primarily a reading assignment, and we run into serious time problems.

READING AND ANALYZING THE ARTICLES

The teacher distributes the package of articles at the next class session and begins the next phase of the project: reading and analysis.

There are many options for the teacher at this time. One is to assign all the articles as homework assignments, perhaps spreading them out over two or three sessions. A second is to read the articles in class as a speed reading exercise. Another might be to have the students present oral summaries of the articles. A combination of these options can be used. All of the articles are discussed in class. Lists of questions on content may be helpful for the first few articles; afterward, as the students become more confident in their comprehension of the material, the class can begin discussing quality - Which article is clearer? Which one is most informative? Which one contains misleading statistics?

As the students read the articles, they are asked to circle any vocabulary or questionable statements and to underline the sections that they find the most helpful or think that they should quote. The whole class then comes to a decision on which sections are the most quotable for the paper. Because of the reduced scope of this paper, formal notetaking and the use of notecards are not covered.

SYNTHESIZING THE INFORMATION

The next phase is synthesis. It is always reassuring to the students to note that they have already finished the most difficult part of their task, choosing and narrowing a subject and finding, reading and analyzing sources. At this point the class writes a thesis statement. This task is done together on the blackboard, with revision, correction, feedback and further revision, until it is the thesis statement that satisfies the group. The teacher can help smooth rough edges and guide the class so that statements such as "I will write about why American teenagers get pregnant" or "Why should high developed country with technology like U.S. have too much pregnancy that can be stopped?" can become a statement such as "This paper will discuss the main reasons for the epidemic rate of pregnancy among American teenagers."

Then the students prepare a working outline of the paper, including the thesis statement. The outlines are collected, corrected, and the best one(s) duplicated. A working outline is very helpful, especially if the students know that it is not sacrosanct, that it might even change a bit as they progress.

DOCUMENTING THE SOURCE MATERIAL

The students are now ready for an explanation of bibliography and parenthetical documentation writing. Following new MLA style, the class practices inserting necessary documentation of the source into the body of the paper, not in a footnote. However, information on footnote and endnote style is also provided, assuming that some teachers will still insist on the more elaborate form.

With this docmentation mechanism in hand, they practice composing one or more sentences using quotes from our "core" articles. They quote directly, placing the introductory information at the beginning, at the middle, at the end of the citation, and even between two consecutive quotes from the same source. Then they practice writing a paraphrase and summary of the same material. The students are responsible for using a variety of these techniques; using all direct quotations or all paraphrases is unacceptable.

After reviewing the correct bibliographic format once more, the students are expected to be able to produce a bibliography for the following class session. The teachers collect, correct and return the bibliographies as soon as possible, perhaps the same day they are handed in if there is enough time.

The teachers also review other elements of writing the paper needed for the formal composing activity; namely, how to construct a title page (following the guidelines of their particular instituion); what kinds of transitional signals are appropriate for certain types of situations; what kinds of conclusions are effective in research paper writing. Slower classes might need to prepare concluding statements as a class. The more able students would rather be allowed some latitude for their own comments and creativity in the conclusion.

WRITING THE PAPER

The students are now ready for the formal composing of the paper. They begin writing it in class, in a writing-lab type of setting, with the teacher circulating among the students. They are instructed to bring the following items to class that day: English/English dictionary, blank, lined paper, outline for the paper, bibliography, Thesaurus (optional).

Then they finish the paper as an out-of-class assignment. They are instructed that the final product should consist of: title page, outline with thesis statement, body (paginated), and bibliography.

EVALUATING THE PAPER

The students' papers are evaluated for content, organization, grammar, mechanics, and vocabulary. The papers are returned to be revised. The teachers try to provide at least one hour of a one-on-one feedback session to clear up any problems for the students. The revisions, along with the originals, are handed in and re-evaluated by the teacher and a final grade is given.

Is there any creativity in this type of writing? Is there too much control? It is amazing how much variety occurs in these papers. No two students think alike and no paper is ever very much like another student's. An analogy might be drawn to an art class where everyone is provided with the same materials and the same model, but no two pieces of art are the same. What the teacher has done is to remove almost any chance of error from the process. We guide the students in every step of the research process so that the following semester, when they have instructors who cannot give the students this type of intensive assistance, they will have the confidence to do research and hand in papers that will not be detrimental to their academic progress.

A review of the controlled elements of this research paper can be found below:

1. Choice of topic
2. Location and choice of sources
3. Identification of material to be extracted from sources
4. Title page
5. Outline
6. Thesis statement
7. (Conclusion)*
8. Parenthetical documentation of sources (or footnoting/endnoting)
9. (Transitional material)*
10. Bibliography

* These elements are controlled to a lesser degree.

INDIVIDUALIZING THE PROCESS

We might consider how this project can be individualized for certain situations. Individualization can be achieved in many ways. For example, graduate students might be asked to choose more articles, or longer ones. Or they might be asked to call a government agency to ask for information on the sub-

ject. Located in Washington, D.C., our program takes advantage of this convenience every semester. The Department of Health and Human Services is a favorite source of information for our students. And, as mentioned before, we ask the graduate students to help the undergraduates locate sources during the library session.

Still another variation on source gathering is to have the students interview someone about their subject. Interviews are not always possible, but they are usally worthwhile. Although it would be too uncomfortable to interview a pregnant teenager for the paper on teen pregnancy, it might be possible to interview someone from the Sociology Department who is studying this problem or perhaps working with pregnant teens.

Another way to individualize might be to allow graduate students or others who do not seem to be needing quite so much guidance to choose a topic related to, but not exactly the same as, the class topic. Instead of causes of the teen pregnancy epidemic, for example, they might want to do the effects on society. Their papers might also be a bit longer, perhaps five pages.

STUDENT REACTIONS

The feedback that we have gotten from the students in our program about the project is almost always positive. The inexperienced undergraduate students feel that they could successfully complete research assignments in their courses the next semester. They did not feel that way before undertaking the project. The graduate students have said that, although the process of finding sources may be only technically different from the process in their countries, the style of organizing the paper and incorporating sources is different enough to make the assignment of great value to them. And the teachers feel that they have finally been able to guide their classes through the dangerous side streets of the research process without losing even one tourist. There is no chance for error. There is virtually no occurrence of plagiarism. There is only the possibility of a successful and safe trip for all.

THE AUTHOR

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IS ROLE PLAYING AN EFFECTIVE EFL TEACHING TECHNIQUE?

Frances L. Smith
Georgetown University

The major issues in second language teaching today center on the interrelationships between language learning, the individual, and context. This approach stands in contrast to the behavioral-structuralist approach, which assumed that if linguistic forms could be mastered through decontextualized drills and pattern practices, the student would be capable of applying the forms to life outside the classroom. Having found this method to be somewhat boring and ineffective, classroom teachers are striving to provide the appropriate contextualization now believed to promote the acquisition of the communicative functions of language.

As a result of this shift in focus, the technique of role playing, with its many variations, has become very popular. However, its effectiveness has been difficult to validate. There are several reasons for this, all of which can be traced back to questions in linguistic (sociolinguistic, psycholinguistic) theory. First, there is no one-to-one correspondence between linguistic form and communicative function. Second, there is no straightforward way of measuring the intricate relationship between language comprehension and production or between competence and performance. Third, we still know very little about the interdependencies among language, thought, and communication within specific cultures and sub-cultures. Fourth, we are only now discovering the influence of affect, or emotion, on the individual's social and non-social cognition.

The professional literature on role playing may be categorized according to the benefits this technique offers the student in terms of improved acquisition of (1) language or linguistic skills, (2) communicative skills, (3) cross-cultural skills, and (4) interpersonal relationship skills. After referring to several articles that examine each category, I will discuss some reasons why role playing in actual practice may not be as effective as it appears in theory.

ACQUISITION OF LINGUISTIC SKILLS

How does the use of role playing lead to improved acquisition of linguistic skills? According to Scarcella in "Socio-Drama for Social Interaction" (1978), role plays are useful for two reasons. First, they force the student to pay attention. Students pay attention to the verbal environment in role play activities because these activities are relevant to their interests, "utilizing both extrinsic motivation, which refers

to the students' daily interests and cares, and intrinsic motivation, which refers to the students' internal feelings and attitudes" (Stevick 1971 in Scarcella 1978:45). They also pay attention because everyone, even the audience, has an active role; because they are working with peers; and because they are involved in a "problem-solving activity which simulates real life situations" (Scarcella:45).

Secondly, role plays allow students the choice of learning through formal rules or informal acquisition. In one phase of the activity,

> the teacher isolates vocabulary, and perhaps some grammatical structures and discourse strategies in a formal way and appeals to the students; conscious learning processes. However, in the enactment stage there is no overt teaching. Thus, students are free to accept or reject language from the enactment discourse much as speakers do in everyday language situations. (Rietmann 1977 in Scarcella:45)

Scarcella also claims that the teacher can create a relaxed atmosphere through socio-drama, one which gives students "practice and security in performing before others" (45). The emphasis, then, is on oral performance of a role as an indicator of linguistic knowledge.

Another example of the connection between linguistic sills and role playing is mentioned by DiPietro in "The Open-Ended Scenario: A New Approach to Conversation."

> According to Clark (1980:55), for example, the intention of role-plays is to put the students into a realistic communication situation in order to "sharpen their listening comprehension skills, bring them into contact with new language, and discover areas where they need additional practice." (DiPietro 1982:15)

However, DiPietro regards these purposes for using role plays as inadequate. As we will see later, he advocates "the open-ended scenario? as a means to encourage the student to produce authentic, self-generated, communicative language.

In "Breaking Down the Free Conversation Myth," Taylor and Wolfson (1978) claim that "in a domestic EFL program, class time devoted to having foreign students talk in a totally free and unstructured way is wasted" (31). In other words, having students "produce" conversations merely for the sake of practicing forms aloud in order to achieve fluency does not work. For one thing, students who are already fluent will

dominate the conversations,leaving others to listen to their ungrammatical structures. But more importantly for Taylor and Wolfson, such conversation is not "goal oriented." They cite a number of studies (Selinker 1972; Gardner and Lambert 1972; Lukmani 1972; Taylor 1973; and Saegert, Scott, Perkins, and Tucker 1974) in which English proficiency was tied to students' goals rather than to length of EFL study.

According to this view, language proficiency includes not only linguistic rules but sociolinguistic rules of use. In the Taylor-Wolfson model, sociolinguistic rules are explicitly taught, similarly to the way course content in history or sociology is presented. Then, sample situaitons are used to illustrate the rules. Finally, the students practice the model by role playing a similar situation. The emphasis is on accomplishing a goal while following the rules of speaking.

ACQUISITION OF COMMUNICATIVE SKILLS

Di Pietro has been influenced by the British linguist M.A.K. Halliday who views language as inseparable from social context. In "The Concept of Personal Involvement in Foreign Language Study," Di Pietro (1984) has developed some of Halliday's ideas into a classroom procedure called "strategic interaction." By using open-ended scenarios, he has added a new, vital dimension to role playing. His approach provides an answer to our second question, "How does the use of role playing lead to the student's improved acquisition of communicative skills?"

For Di Pietro the student must be free to decide how, with whom, and for what intention s/he is going to interact with otehrs in a role play situation. Traditional role plays have proved to be inadequate because they were constructed only as "learning-enhancement activities" for the purpose of practicing certain "social protocols and grammatical constructions" (1984: 13). His idea is that "if we are to seek ego involvement with our language, thereby fostering acquisition, then we must build a bridge between the methodology and the student's personal experiences" (1984:13-14). In his courses, students begin by using teacher-constructed scenarios drawn from newspapers, literature, etc., but eventually they are able to devise their own scenarios based on events in their personal lives. In this way the students "develop a feeling of control that is not possible with role plays or memorized dialogues" (14).

Di Pietro notes the following example:

> Lantolf and Khanji report on the language use of a student who was allowed to switch from discussing a picture (as in the bilingual syntax measurement test) to talking about religion, a matter of much greater interest to him. The shift in topic from one that was clearly artifactual to one that was, for all intents, a "real" interest resulted in a marked change in verbal behavior. The change included the use of embedded clauses, an expanded vocabulary, and a more concerted effort to employ nonverbals to support conversatoin. (1984:14)

In "Discourse and Real-Life Roles in the ESL Classroom," Di Pietro points out two dimensions within which the formal structure of discourse is embedded. One is 'transactional' which involves the intentions and strategies of the speakers; the other is 'interactional' which consists of the "social, maturational, and emotive roles" of the participants (1981:28). Human discourse occurs as 'scripting;' that is, what people say and how they say it are based on their previous socialization experiences.

According to Di Pietro, verbal strategies differ on the basis of whether or not the role relationship is reciprocal. If the interactants are moving toward an expected shared goal (e.g. a customer buying a hat from a salesperson), their language will be complementary and a lot of redundant material can be omitted without causing ambiguities. Verbal strategies will also differ on the basis of whether or not the role relationship is a longstanding one.

In his article on open-ended scenarios, Di Pietro (1982) expands the notion of strategies as a verbal repertoire that is responsive to speakers' intentions and adequate for use over time to include also the structural features of conversation, such as openers, connectors, preclosers, and closers as well as other devices for correcting false starts, marking turn-taking, etc. At the present time, teachers have no other pedagogical means of teaching these skills than by illustrating them. There is also a need to develop classroom techniques for using direct, oral conversation to generate the more indirect, reported language in the written mode.

ACQUISITION OF CROSS-CULTURAL SKILLS

"How does the use of role playing lead to a student's improved acquisition of cross-cultural skills?" In "The Use of Role Play to Overcome Cultural Fatigue," Donahue and Parsons (1982)

present a method of using role play as an opportunity for discussing cultural differences in a sensitive manner. Their reason for using role plays is to help students understand that by learning a new language, "they are not being asked to change their identity but are being asked to change the form through which they express that identity" (360). The desired outcomes of this kind of role play are trust and tolerance of others. In the final step of the Donahue-Parsons procedure, the goals are

> a) to realize the difference between analytically observing another's performance of a role and emotionally becoming that character
>
> b) to provide insight on how culture influences actions subconsciously (363)

They close their article by citing Rivers' (1972) suggestion that foreign language programs be redesigned to achieve the outcome of changing the students' attitudes toward their own language and toward language and communication in general.

In a related article, "Living the Language through Simulation," Semke argues for in-depth, extended role play, using her own method as a prototype.

> Although flexible in design, the unit was planned for twenty-eight to thirty (fifty-minute) class sessions (in other words, six to seven weeks...), with every second day devoted to the actual simulation and alternate days used for preparation, which includes cultural research, vocabulary learning learning, and grammar review. The simulation can be adapted to class sizes of from ten to twenty-five students, perhaps even more. (4)

In order to involve her students in authentic, realistic role play, she felt that the following elaborate preparations were necessary:

> In order to obtain these role models, I spent a summer in the countries of West Germany, Austria, and Switzerland interviewing people of various ages and walks of life. All in all, I visited in the homes of eighteen different families and conducted interviews with a total of thirty-seven individuals of these families... The respondents and their environments were photographed... These thirty-seven people provide a pool of authentic role models for the simulation. (5)

Although Semke's thoroughness is impressive, not all teachers would agree completely with her assumptions. However, the idea of having students work at identifying with the roles of persons in another culture leads us naturally to our fourth and final question, "How does the use of role play lead to students' improved acquisition of inter-personal skills?"

ACQUISITION OF INTER-PERSONAL SKILLS

This fourth question goes to the core of the rationale behind the role play technique. It is assumed that language use involves decisions about "appropriateness" and "politeness" rather than "correctness." In fact, "correctness" has been successfully shown to be a socially relative term that traditional teachers who focused on the standard language were misusing. Standard language sets up middle class values and world view as the norm to be followed.

However, the relativistic "performance" representation of "linguistic reality" as being "interaction" still leaves many questions unsatisfactorily answered. The more researchers look at "appropriateness" and "choice" in communication, the more they discover the tremendous power of language teachers to shape the perceptions their students will have of others. Language teachers, whether they realize it or not, possess great power to speak for the group whose language they are teaching and thus to manipulate value systems as well as language systems. Hunsinger (1982) in "Methodologies of Teaching Communication Ethics," puts it this way:

> At the very outset it must be stated that communication and ethical decision making are so intertwined that one cannot be thought of without the other. Ethics, as a systematic, moral, philosophical, and religious set of principles, is established by a dynamic process of communication. The formulation of an ethical code is both an intra and interpersonal process and the expression of ethical decisions is dependent on communicative abilities.
>
> Ethics is more than thinking and talk. Our attitudes and actions are the means of communicating our ethical positions. However, when we enter into ethical decision making exercises, we often find that the way we communicate our ethical choices are conditioned by the dynamics of the communication process more than by our well developed "ethical systems." If we are responsive to feedback from others in our communication we can almost feel the pressures being exerted when we make ethical decisions involving other people. (3)

Hunsinger also is in favor of using the socio-drama technique. From observing his students perform in role plays, he has discovered that "ethical choice must be forced and if there are not time limits on the socio-dramas and no demand for choices to be made the students will just continue to talk to avoid that crucial point of making the decisions" (9). This insight should be of interest to humanistic language teachers like Di Pietro. Many of Di Pietro's sample scenarios require strategies for telling white lies or getting out of awkward or embarrassing situations.

The reason for exalting the effectiveness of role plays appears to be that it promotes learning new behaviors in a less artificial and more interactive way than do other techniques. Most psychologists, linguists, and social scientists would like to believe that by controlling variables they can predict "behavior," that is, predict the decisions that people will most likely make according to appropriate role guidelines. However, to phenomenologists such a view is too simplistic.

Halling (1981), in "Surprised by the Other: Choice Points in Relationships," quotes the French phenomenologist Merleau-Ponty in the following excerpt:

> 'Science...manipulates things and gives up living in them...it comes face to face with the real world only at rare intervals.' (By 'real world' he means the world as it is given in experience.)...Yet phenomenological psychology aims to return to phenomena, to dwell in them and to circumscribe them. (2-3)

Halling observes that most psychological theory and research describe the decision-making process in terms of an individual's own conscious anticipation of dilemmas and systematic weighing of alternatives. In reality, however,

> genuine 'contact' with another person occurs spontaneously when we are deeply in touch with ourselves, and is not the result of deliberate effort. At such moments--creative moments indeed as we have seen--we break away from roles and patterns, and are open to the novelty of the situation. (12-13)

In conclusion, I would not suggest that promoters of role plays are not concerned with human individuality and creativity. In fact, most of them aim for individual self-discovery through cross-cultural dramas. I would, however, caution that they may have set their goals too high and may, in the process, be wasting class time which could be devoted to more academic and vocational communicative objectives. Conversational routines are easy to manipulate but very difficult to instill in students. Whereas traditional teaching methods reward "the memorizers" (usually introverts), methods based on the goal of communicative competence reward "the actors" (usually the extroverts). However, psycholinguists have yet to prove that one learning style is inherently significantly superior to another. The memorizers might even be able to argue successfully that they "pay attention" and learn faster without having to "put on" or "stage" an act in the process.

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RESEARCH ON THE CLOZE PROCEDURE AS MEASUREMENT OF READING COMPREHENSION AND ITS USE IN THE EFL CLASSROOM

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The cloze procedure as a measuring technique is no longer really new. It was first introduced by W.L. Taylor in 1953, but it attracted little notice until the 1960's. Literally hundreds of research efforts were made after that, but in foreign language testing the cloze test was still a relatively untried instrument up to the mid 1970's. In the past ten years, however, the cloze test has become increasingly popular with foreign language teachers. As Porter (1978) remarked, the cloze test is used as a "weapon in the teacher's armoury" (333). The cloze procedure has been used to measure readability, reading comprehension, language proficiency, aural and oral language ability, and reader's I.Q. My purpose in this paper is to review some aspects of using the cloze procedure in the measurement of reading comprehension and to reflect upon its use in the EFL classroom.

A good test possesses three characteristics: reliability, validity, and practicality (Harris 1969). The practicality of the cloze test is evident in the test's construction and scoring.

Cloze Test Construction

A cloze test usually consists of a prose passage in which some words are deleted for subsequent reconstruction by subjects. The most commonly employed deletion system in cloze studies is the "nth word deletion system," which systematically deletes words through a passage, for example, every eighth or ninth word. It seems evident that the cloze test is easy and quick to prepare and that no training or particular skills on the part of the test constructors are required.

In preparing a cloze test for reading comprehension in an EFL class, the mechanical deletion system of nth word seems appropriate. Wainman's experiment (1979) showed that the mechanical deletion of every 10th word produces results that agree closely with results obtained by an intuitive deletion of content words. In his study, Wainman also noticed that EFL students' errors were made up almost equally of content and function words while first language learners' errors showed a much higher proportion of content errors. Since content and

function words seemed to cause equal problems for ESL students, the cloze method of mechanical deletion could be expected to achieve results for ESL students which are as good as the results achieved by the deletion of the content words.

However, Anderson (1976) noted that the mechanical deletion system may produce some items that even skilled readers find ambiguous. It is very likely that these items are much too difficult or almost impossible for EFL students to reconstruct, while on the other hand, some very simple or non-discriminating items may be generated. Still, our purpose in using the random deletion system in constructing cloze tests for reading comprehension does not seem to be affected as materials contain different percentages of difficult and easy items, which are important factors in readability and are directly related to the testee's performance in reading comprehension. As it is explained by Taylor (1957) in defending the random-deletion system,

> to restrict deletions to particular kinds of words is to ignore the fact that those kinds may not occur equally often in different materials. That difference in frequency of occurence may itself be a readability factor. (22)

In using the random-deletion method, we must, however, make sure that the passages chosen are of a suitable length so as to allow for about 50 deletions. If a passage is too short, we may not be able to get the information we desire from our students.

In selecting materials for building the tests, I tend to think of using more "pre-cloze tests," that is, constructing cloze tests from materials students have not previously read in class, but possibly keeping a theme corresponding or related to the text being dealt with in class. Too many "post-cloze tests" (tests taken after the students have read or studied the unmutilated passage) may unintentionally encourage students to memorize the passages, thus reducing the reliability of using cloze tests as a measure for reading comprehension or for other purposes. Using pre-cloze tests inspires students to actively participate in the "psycholinguistic guessing game" - reading and comprehension.

Cloze Test Scoring

There are numerous ways of scoring the test, but the two most common ways are (1) to give credit for exact responses only and (2) to give credit for contextually-acceptable responses.

Although studies done by Stubbs and Tucker (1974) and manyother researchers have shown significant and positive correlation ($r=.97$, $p < .01$) between scoring for exact versus contextually-acceptable responses, I still think it is worthwhile to score the test for contextually-acceptable answers in the EFL class. Allowing contextually-acceptable answers increases individual scores, which is encouraging to students. More importantly, contextually-appropriate responses are adequate to indicate students' comprehension of the materials being tested. To require verbatim answers, i.e. to restrict the correct response to exact word replacement only, seems to require more than merely comprehension.

In Hinofotis' study (1980), a cloze test, which was constructed from a passage of 427 words in which every 7th word was delated up to a total of fifty deletions, was given to 107 subjects from a variety of native language backgrounds and with varying degrees of competence in English. The test was then scored both for the cloze-exact response and for the cloze-acceptable response. With the exact-word method, the average percent of correct responses was 24% and with the acceptable-word method, 31%. When the subjects were rank ordered according to both sets of scores, there were few differences in rankings, indicating the positive correlation between the two scoring methods. However, in the calculation of the standard deviations, noticeable differences were observed: 2.08 for the exact-word method and 7.3 for the acceptable-word method. This is not surprising since in the exact-word scoring method, no alternative answers were accepted. Thus, when a wide range of performance is expected as in a situation where students with widely varying language ability are tested, the acceptable-word scoring method is preferable as it provides more accurate information about the testees' levels of English. For EFL classroom use, the acceptable-word method is also more effective in that the information, i.e. the large amount of variance it provides, can serve as a very good diagnostic tool in assessing the students' understanding.

Results from certain item analyses (Harris lecture) have indicated that native speakers tend to use words which are more elaborate than the deleted words. For example, in item 2 of the following cloze test, only 21% of the 53 native English speakers being tested used the original word deleted - 'great.' The other 79% used other adjectives such as 'lasting,' 'significant,' 'profound,' 'drastic,' etc., which seem to fit perfectly in that context.

In the year 787 BEGAN a series of events WHICH
(1)
were to have a GREAT effect upon the history OF the
(2) (3)
English language....

The above example suggests that the more competent users of the language have a large reservoir of vocabulary to choose from. Not using the original word deleted does not mean that they are not able to comprehend the context. This example also indicates the advantage of the contextually-acceptable scoring method over the exact-word scoring method in assessing the testees' language comprehension.

Reliability of the Cloze Test as a Measure of Reading Comprehension

The reliability of a test is manifested in the consistency of scores under repeated measurements.

In Anderson's study (1976), satisfactory reliability coefficients were obtained both by using a different scoring method for the same test and by using the test-retest method. Under different scoring measures (namely, the Verbatim Score Measure, in which each exact replacement of a deleted word was given one mark; the Synonym Score Measure, in which exact replacement of a deleted word was given one mark and each synonym was given half a mark; and the Alternative Response Score Measure, in which each exact replacement of a deleted word was given one mark and each grammatically correct response that fits the original syntactic pattern of language structure and makes sense within the context half a mark) reliability coefficients exceeding 0.90 were obtained for a 36-item test.

In the test-retest method, the same cloze reading comprehension test was administered to the same subjects. Depending on the scale of the test (the number of subjects taking part in the test and the number of items in the test), reliability coefficients from 0.78 to 0.96 were achieved (Anderson 1976). Besides English cloze tests, cloze test experiments in the Chinese and Malay languages were also conducted in a similar

way. Again, high reliability coefficients were obtained.

Porter (1978), however, questioned whether the cloze test is a reliable indicator since in his experiement two cloze tests, each with 50 blanks, constructed from identical material but beginning at two different and arbitrarily selected points, yielded markedly different sets of scores. The two tests were administered to a single population, with an interval of three weeks between the first and the second test. Disregarding the practice-effect, Porter found that the Pearson product moment coefficient of correlation was not as high as expected for a pair of tests which are so similar. For the exact word scores, the coefficient of correlation he obtained was 0.57 and for the acceptable-word scores 0.65. Porter argued that for cloze to be reliable as a test type, we should expect alternative and apparently equivalent forms of a test to show no significant difference in the results. He concluded that the relatively low correlations obtained with either scoring method indicate that students' achievement may vary markedly according to what is deleted and that the construction of cloze tests should be left to the professional tester.

Porter's results seem to be dramatically different from the results of the other studies cited above. As he took quite a different approach in his study, similar research may be needed to see if the results can be replicated, or an analysis of the two tests' cloze items could be conducted to find out exactly where the differences occur.

Validity of the Cloze Test for Reading Comprehension

The validity of a test can be determined if (1) the test is found to be based upon a sound analysis of the skill or skills to be measured, and (2) if there is sufficient evidence that test scores correlate fairly highly with actual ability in the skills being tested (Harris 1969).

To verify that cloze tests for reading comprehension meet the first criterion seems to be extremely difficult. First of all, there is not yet in existence a universally accepted definition of what language comprehension or reading skill is (Flahive 1980). Secondly, there is the issue raised by Farhady (1983) that the items in a cloze test are not developed by the test developer and therefore they cannot measure what the test developer wants to measure. Farhady asserts that if we do not know what a cloze test is measuring, we cannot establish its validity. However, a large number of criterion-related validity studies have

been carried out on cloze tests, from which, I hope, we can draw some insight.

The concept of internal and external information is relevant to a discussion of cloze tests as a measurement of reading comprehension. When Fanselow, in a classroom situation, showed a picture of camels, sheep, cattle, and shepherds, the students "saw" four legs on both camels even though the leg of one of the camels was actually obscured by a boy walking beside it. They also "saw" the heads of all the sheep and cattle although some of the heads were obscured by the shepherds. These illusions occurred because the viewers' internal information contributed to the external information provided in the picture itself. (In this case the external information is the visual message available and the internal information is the information we have in our heads based on our prior experience.)

It seems to me that reading comprehension requires, to a large extent, the integration of this intenal and external information, and doing cloze tests is much like looking at Fanselow's partially obscured picture. In fact, this is similar to the concept of closure in Gestalt psychology, which refers to the natural human psychological tendency to fill in gaps in imperfect visual patterns. Porter (1976) remarked that the student, while being required to predict the missing words, is being tested on his ability to continuously draw from the context clues available and to draw information from his old knowledge to predict the nature of the language immediately ahead. This ability to predict what lies ahead depends on his ability to comprehend the language being processed and the internal information he possesses. This, to a certain degree, provides the justification for the cloze test as a test of comprehension.

Evidence of the validity of cloze tests as measure of readability was also shown in experiments in which the same test passages were administered to independent samples of subjects, and the samples ranked the passages in the same order of difficulty. In Anderson's experiment (1972), the cloze technique used with some Papua and New Guinea students ranked three passages of English prose in the same order of of difficulty as did experienced reading teachers.

Anderson (1971) pointed out that, defined from a psycholinguistic viewpoint, reading comprehension is the correspondence between the semantic and grammatical habit system of encoders and decoders in the same language. If there is close correspondence between the decoder's and the encoder's system of language habits, then the passage or message is easy to comprehend. If there is not, comprehension is difficult. As

readability or reading difficulty of a passage and the reader's comprehension of a passage are not independent entities, I would think that the reliability of the cloze test as a measurement of readability lends itself to the validity of the cloze test as a measurement of reading comprehension. A student's performance on a cloze test gauges readability; readability in turn affects the student's performance on a cloze test.

Porter (1976) argued that language production is not comprehension. As the examinees are asked to generate the appropriate answer to fill the cloze item, they are being tested not only on their ability to comprehend but on their ability to produce the language as well. He concluded that it was misleading to suggest that the cloze test was measuring comprehension.

To measure what comprehension tests intend to measure, he suggested a modified cloze procedure which supplies a set of words for each cloze item. The modified cloze test has one great merit in that it has in it an aspect of control in supplying the sets of words for the cloze item. Whether it is a measure of pure comprehension is unknown, but it certainly takes a much longer time to prepare. Also, in the set of words for the cloze item, the choices among the distractors can show different degrees of relationship to the original answer, thus resulting in a scoring problem.

How should one evaluate the differences among the distractors for the cloze item? If we give credit to the correct answers only, we certainly miss a lot of information about how our students interpret the passage. It is obvious that when the modified cloze test combined the cloze procedure with the multiple-choice test, it inherited the merits and demerits of both.

For the EFL classroom the usual kind of cloze test as a measure of reading comprehension is recommended, as it is powerful and economical. Attempting to build tests which test purely reading comprehension but nothing else, may, in most cases, exceed the limits of EFL teachers' time and energy and may not be necessary. However, there is no harm in being aware that various aspects of linguistic and even non-linguistic ability may be involved in the performance of the cloze as a reading comprehension test. Stansfield and Hansen' experiment (1983) suggested there may be a cognitive bias operating in conjunction with cloze test performance; that is, a student's characteristic, field dependent-independent cognitive style, could be a variable in the cloze test performance.

Alderson (1983) also questioned the assumption that cloze tests are good devices for assessing reading comprehension. He found that the cloze items in the cloze tests he used tended to measure linguistic skills of a relatively lower order. According to Alderson, the cloze test is largely confined to the immediate environment of a blank because the procedure deletes single words rather than phrases or clauses.

As recognizing cohesive devices was defined as a higher-order skill related to reading comprehension, Brown (1980) investigated the problem of whether a cloze passage tests recognition of cohesive devices and to what degree. Cohesive devices such as those presented by Halliday and Hasan - reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction and lexical cohesion - were counted for the entire passage and then for the original blanks deleted. The results of these analyses indicated that such cohesive devices accounted for or were involved in between 56 and 70 percent of the items in different deletion patterns, while accounting for 52.25 percent of the words in the entire passage.

It appears from these results that cohesive devices play a rather substantial role in what the cloze passage is testing. Contrary to Alderson, Brown's findings confirmed that more than lower-order linguistic skills are involved in the cloze test and that the cloze test does test reading comprehension.

The validity of cloze tests as measures of reading comprehension is also determined by correlating cloze scores with those of standardized tests of reading and other measures of reading comprehension made over the same materials, which is also a way to try out the second criterion of Harris' test validity. In Anderson's experiment (1976), significant correlations between standard- and exact-length versions of cloze tests and a standardized measure of reading comprehension were obtained (0.61, 0.75 respectively). Other experiments on concurrent validity, predictive validity and construct validity all showed satisfactory results.

Compared with the traditional reading comprehension question tests and other types of comprehension tests, the cloze reading comprehension tests eliminate the comprehension problems posed in the question themselves, thus saving us the trouble of worrying about whether the student answered incorrectly because s/he could not understand the passage being tested or because s/he could not understand the questions.

Also, marking can be done by students soon after they have completed the tests, so that immediate knowledge of results and feedback to the teacher can be obtained. If the cloze test is followed by discussion, the students' comprehension of the original author might be enhanced. Another advantage of the cloze test is flexibility; the teacher can vary the word-blank frequency according to the ability level of the class or as the course progresses, although this may be effective only to a very limited extent.

In general, the cloze test is a practical and powerful measurement. Many results of criterion-related studies seem to be in favor of the cloze test as a test of reading comprehension,despite the fact that there still exists some controversy over its reliability and validity. Great efforts have been made in the research of cloze tests, but there is still much to be pursued, much to be confirmed or refuted. However, for EFL classroom use, the cloze reading comprehension test, as a component of testing, can play an important role and is expected to be used more extensively by EFL teachers.

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READING IN ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE: SOME RECENT RESEARCH*

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My purpose is to review content-area reading in English as a foreign language, first within a linguistic framework, then within an educational one. The emphasis will be on recent empirical research and its implications for the teaching of reading to non-native speakers.

Within a **psycholinguistic** framework (Rumelhart 1981), a distinction is made between comprehending and comprehension.

Comprehending is an interactive process between the writer and the reader. The text by itself - the words, sentences or passages used - does not have a meaning. It only directs the reader to construct meaning from his/her background knowledge. This background knowledge is structured in schemata. They vary, they are hierarchically organized; they can be concrete or abstract. In comprehending, one schema at a time becomes activated in the reader's mind.

In fact, there are two modes of schema activation. One of them is usually referred to as top-down or concept-driven processing, the other as bottom-up or data-driven processing. In the first case, the reader proceeds from whole to parts, in the second, from parts to whole. In this processing the reader tests various schemata until s/he finds one that adequately accounts for the text s/he is reading. The result is comprehension.

Occasionally the reader will not understand the text correctly. Rumelhart (1981) gives three reasons for this. Firstly, the reader may not have the appropriate schema. Therefore the concept being communicated will not make any sense to the reader. Secondly, the reader may have the appropriate schema, but the clues in the text will perhaps not be sufficient to activate it. In this case, the text will not make any sense to the reader, either. With additional clues, however, it may be comprehended. Thirdly, the reader may resort to a schema different from the one intended by the writer. In this case, there will be two interpretations to the text. The reader may be said to have misunderstood the writer.

Let me take an example. Consider the following sentence in Finnish:

Poliisi pysäytti henkilöauton.

Beginners of Finnish will probably process this from bottom-up, that is letter-by-letter, word-by-word. In this process, they try to relate it to something familiar, a schema. The text, however, does not have many clues for them to activate a schema. Therefore they probably will not understand it.

On the other hand, consider the above sentence in English (adapted from Collins and Quillian 1972, discussed in Carrell and Eisterhold 1983):

The policeman stopped the car.

Native speakers of English will either process this from bottom-up or top-down, if they happen to know beforehand that the whole text is about traffic regulation in general or possibly about a particular traffic cop say, on M Street in Washington DC.

The schema most likely to be activated is a traffic cop one. Interestingly, this schema may activate related ideas, not explicit in the text: the policeman may have wanted to stop the car because the driver of the car was driving through a red light, or because he was drunk, or because there had been a car accident, and so on. At any rate, these readers will comprehend the text.

Further, let us consider the sentence as part of a reading comprehension test. Two students, Sam and Tom, will be asked to answer two inferential questions about the text; first, 'Did the policeman's hand touch the car?'; second, 'Were the car's brakes applied?'

Sam reads the text with the traffic cop schema in his mind. Accordingly, the policeman only raises his hand to signal to the driver to stop his car, and so he applies the brakes. Therefore, Sam's answer to the first question is 'No' and to the second 'Yes.' Tom, on the other hand, considers a Superman schema the most appropriate for the interpretation of the text. So he thinks that Superman forcefully stops the car with his hand, and so the driver need not apply the brakes at all. This is fiction. Consequently, Tom's answers to the two questions are 'Yes' and 'No.' Two different schemata were activated: Sam probably understood the writer, whereas Tom did not.

Recent psycholinguistic reading comprehension modelling (Goodman 1968, Smith 1978) and the schema theory (Rumelhart 1981, Widdowson 1983) have implications not only for conducting English as a foreign language reading comprehension classes (e.g. Been 1975, Berman 1975, Pierce 1975, Clark and Silberstein 1977, Carrell and Eisterhold 1983) but also for testing and experimentation.

Let me review three experiments which seem representative, first, for their problems and methods, and secondly, for their subjects. They are among the few experiments with young non-native adult speakers of English.

Study 1. In their four related studies Cohen et al. (1979)

posed the question: "What is problematic for non-native readers when they are reading material in a specialized field written in English?"

Their subjects were twelve university students majoring in biochemistry, biology, economics, and history who acted as informants. In all four studies, the students were asked to underline all the words and structures they found difficult to understand in an extract from their course readings; in the fourth, they were also asked to answer some content questions.

Across disciplines, the students were found to have similar problems. These included heavy noun-phrase subjects and objects, syntactic markers of cohesion, and the use of non-technical vocabulary in technical texts.

Study 2. Carrell (1983) set out to study the individual and interactive effects of three separate variables of background knowledge on reading comprehension. The three components were:

1) prior knowledge in the content area of the text: a familiar topic versus a novel one
2) prior knowledge that the text is about a particular content area: context provided versus no context provided
3) degree to which the words in the text reveal the content area: transparent versus opaque vocabulary.

Her subjects were both native and non-native speakers of English, all undergraduates. They were asked to read two 100-word manipulated texts. The topic of one of the texts, "Washing Clothes," was familiar to the students; the other one, "Balloon Serenade," was novel. Some texts were provided with a title and a picture while others were not. The texts had either concrete or abstract lexical items (e.g. 'clothes' versus 'things'). After having read the texts, the subjects were to write down as much as they could remember from the texts.

Then the number of idea units was counted for each recall. The maximums were 17 and 14 for "Washing Clothes" and "Balloon Serenade," respectively. The percentage of idea units recalled ranged from 22 to 53 for the natives, and from 17 to 31 for the intermediate ESL students. In addition, it was found that all the three components of background knowledge affected the recall percentage significantly in the case of natives, whereas not in the case of non-native speakers of English.

Study 3. In his short report, Aslanian (1985) analyses three interview transcripts from three high intermediate English as a second language college students. They had first read a short passage and answered two multiple-choice questions. Here is the text and the questions:

> Bridges
> Bridges are built to allow continuous flow of highway and railway traffic across water lying in their paths. But engineers cannot forget the fact that river traffic, too, is essential to our economy. The role of (1) ... is important. To keep these vessels moving freely, bridges are

> built high enough, when possible, to let them pass underneath. Sometimes, however, channels must accommodate very tall ships. It may be uneconomical to build a tall enough bridge. The (2) ... would be too high. To save money, engineers build movable bridges.
> (1) a. wind b. boats c. weight d. wires e. experience
> (2) a. levels b. boats c. standards d. waves e. deck

He found that there was invariably a difference between what the text said and what the students understood. Student 1 failed both multiple-choice questions; still, he got the gist of the text:

> Observer: Now tell me everything you understood from this passage? What is the important point in the passage?
> Student: To save money, to have movable bridges.

Contrast this with Student 3:

> Observer: Now tell me everything you understood from this passage.
> Student: I think this passage is about the economy with traffic in ... you see, they're trying to build boats but they feel boats are too expensive because of the economy, the traffic, I guess: they feel that because we have too many traffic, the boats are very important, you know. Because in the river traffic we need more boats.

Student 3 came up with the correct answers to the two multiple-choice questions but "her arguments are all mixed up and sometimes contradictory; moreover, they are frequently irrelevant."

As can be seen from these studies, reading comprehension is not solely a result of text variables such as sentence complexity and length or vocabulary. It is, in fact, to a great extent dependent on reader variables, and language competence is certainly only one among them. Besides, as reading comprehension cannot be observed directly, it can only be measured indirectly. In large-scale testing, it is common to use a number of short passages with multiple-choice questions or, occasionally, open-ended ones. More recently, the cloze procedure has also been used for this purpose. So in addition to the text and reader variables, method variables are also involved in reading comprehension testing and experimentation.

Much of the research on reading comprehension has been psychometric. This means that test situations and real-life reading situations are far apart. There is hardly any context or content for reading. More specifically, comprehension is equated with recalling and texts are very short ranging from one hundred to a few hundred words. And measuring is quantitative. The primary concern is how much has been comprehended, that is, recalled. Measuring is also prescriptive. Therefore, recalls are

compared with original texts only. Further, comprehending, the process, has been neglected.

The conclusions of the three studies seem to point to new directions. Cohen et al. (1979) note:

> It may well be that the question posed in this study, "What is problematic in reading texts in a foreign language?" is ultimately less fruitful for curriculum writers and teachers than the question, "How do learners go about solving problems in reading?" The former yields findings as to forms to teach, and the latter yields insight into cognitive strategies to teach.

And Carrell (1983) concludes:

> ... several additional questions require investigation. For example, do ESL readers utilize these components of background information when reading in their native language but somehow fail to transfer these strategies to reading in a foreign language ... Further, how do nonnative readers conceptualize the reading process? In their native language? In their second language? What do they think they are doing and how are they going about doing it? In other words, we need to know not only what these readers aren't doing, but what they are doing and what they think about what they're doing.

Aslanian (1985) points out finally that psychometric means alone (i.e. multiple-choice questions, cloze procedure, or fill-in-the-blank tasks) are not likely to measure true comprehension. Usually they only indicate what the reader should have understood and not what he has really understood.

On more theoretical grounds, Thorndyke and Yekovich (1980) also question the schema theory. The theory has plausibility but it lacks descriptive power, predictive ability and testability.

Interestingly, questions of this kind have not only been posed within the psycholinguistic framework but also within an **educational** framework, in particular by a group of educators in Sweden. Instead of comprehending and comprehension, they talk about the learning process and its outcome.

It is primarily their research perspective that tells these educators apart from others. They suggest a phenemenological approach to learning (Elton and Laurillard 1979, Marton 1981, Gibbs et al. 1982). Learning should be studied from a student's point of view, taking into account three factors. First, learning always has a context (e.g. consider a student preparing for a content area midterm examination). Secondly, learning has a meaningful content (e.g. consider a student studying an article as required reading for a seminar). Finally, the learner, an adult, is aware of his/her way of learning and is able to account for it.

Let me review some of their studies into the relationship of the learning process and its outcome.

In one study, Marton (1975) asked thirty university students to read a newspaper article. The article criticized a new curriculum reform. The idea was to increase the examination pass rate, which was considered too low. The writer of the article disagreed. He showed that the basic assumptions of this reform were false and suggested selective measures to be taken instead of the proposed general uniform measures. After reading the article, the students gave a summary of what they had read immediately after the study session and again some four weeks later. They were also asked to tell how they went about reading the article. This way two kinds of data were gained: about the learning outcome and the process.

Qualitative differences were found in the learning outcome data. Four categories were established, and they make up the outcome space:

Category A: The text argues for selective measures to be taken exclusively for those students who do not fill the necessary requirements.
Category B: The text argues for different measures to be taken depending on the student group.
Category C: The text argues for measures to be taken to increase the pass rate.
Category D: The text points out that there are differences between student groups and causes for their differences.

I should stress that this categorization was based on the summaries by the students, not the learning material. The categories are hierarchically inclusive, and they allow not only interindividual but also intraindividual comparisons over time.

The introspective accounts by the students revealed two ways of processing the learning material (see also Marton and Säljö 1976).

There are students who focus their attention on the sign when studying. They process the learning material at a surface level, memorizing as much as possible from it. To give some examples:

a) Well, I just concentrated on trying to remember as much as possible.
b) I remembered ... but, I'd sort of memorized everything I'd read ... no, not everything, but more or less.
c) There were a lot of different lines of thought to follow and try and memorize.

On the other hand, there are students who pay attention to what is meant, trying to understand what the text is about. These students process the text at a deeper level and learn something qualitatively different. To give some examples:

a) I tried to look for ... you know, the principal

ideas ...

b) ... and what you think about then, well it's you know, what was the point of the article, you know.

c) ... I thought about how he had built up the whole thing.

The processing of the learning material and the learning outcome were found to be closely related. As a rule, students with deep-level strategies learned from the article something identical with or close to the writer's intent, whereas students with surface-level strategies learned something more general and hierarchically at a lower level.

Later, Svensson (1976) also found that the way students approach a text affects the outcome.

One approach is atomistic in nature, the other holistic. Atomistic students pay attention to parts of the text, its details and the surface structure. Their recalling is typically reproductive. Holistic students instead focus on the meaning under the surface structure. Their recalling is rather reconstructive.

These studies call for a more holistic approach to learning. And in describing any aspect of learning one should aim at quality rather than quantity; one should consider learning in different contexts rather than in general terms; one should try to understand rather than to explain by establishing causes and effects.

These studies point to new directions in research on content-area reading in English as a foreign language. Study contexts would be pictured from a student's perspective. Non-native readers of English, their learning process and outcomes from learning materials in their mother tongues (which has been the case so far) and in English could be compared, possibly also with those of native readers of English.

This approach would complement present psychometric experimentation. Besides, the findings would also form a better basis for teaching English for Academic Purposes.

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TEACHING TO ENHANCE ACQUISITION OF PRAGMATIC COMPETENCE

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This paper will examine some of the problems of acquisition of pragmatic competence in speech experience by language learners and what selected literature in sociolinguistics, applied linguistics, and social psychology implies that L2 teachers can do to enhance its development in the learner. Of special concern will be the development of perceptual and interpretive strategies for elements of context and socio-psychological variables operating in the second language/second culture environment during a speech act or speech event. The ways in which learners are said to make inferences about indirect speech acts during conversation, often in the absence of relevant cultural background knowledge, will be examined. Implications for pedagogy will be drawn from the literature which may aid teachers in providing classroom experiences which could augment students' skill in correctly arriving at speaker intentions during natural, spoken discourse.

Rintell (1979:104) has observed that "once an L2 learner is exposed to a second culture (or culture where the target language is spoken natively, hereafter referred to as C2) he or she rapidly begins to acquire pragmatic competence." Considering the cultural and linguistic relevance of pragmatic norms and the regional, ethnic, political, and class differences of pragmatic language use within even one society or speech community (Hall 1976), the rapidity with which many L2 learners acquire the ability to "effectively" use the L2 within a range of social contexts, would indeed seem remarkable. Nevertheless, the literature has reported cases of L2 learners living in the C2 who fall prey to serious social and psychological problems due largely to a lack of understanding of the social and interpersonal uses and effects of L2 speech (see Graham 1983; Morrison & Bellack 1981; Marcum 1985). Furthermore, reports of adults arriving in the C2 already fluent in the L2 and never attaining a high degree of pragmatic competence (even though they would like to) (Gumperz 1982; Thomas 1983) would lead us to believe that the acquisition of pragmatic competence by L2 learners who must function within the C2 is, most often, not rapid enough. Pragmatic competence is not a natural outgrowth of grammatical competence, C2 contact, or functional-notional syllabi. However, pragmatic competence does appear to be related to overall ability in the L2 (see Carrell 1984)

The teaching of socially appropriate formulaic expressions in the L2 for given contexts such as "dining out" (in various kinds of restaurants, or situations in person's homes) is relevant in that it gives learners with low L2 proficiency basic, functional ability in the C2. This sort of "functional-notional" teaching, however, does not, in my mind, constitute an adequate means to aid the L2 learner in acquiring pragmatic competence.

The ability to quickly and appropriately draw inferences from L2 surface structure and C2 contextual cues during ongoing, spoken

discourse means an L2 learner's social (and sometimes psychological) survival. However, even learners who have long experienced the benefit of the aforementioned may differ significantly from native L2, C2 individuals in what they perceive as meaningful discourse cues. Accordingly, learners may vary in their assumptions about what information is to be conveyed, their understanding about how it is to be ordered and put into words, and their ability to fill in the unverbalized information needed to make sense of the ongoing action during a communicative interaction (Gumperz 1982:173). This may lead to misunderstandings, the exact origins of which go unnoticed in the course of the interaction; or, it may lead to direct miscommunication and misinterpretation of contextual cues (e.g., prosodic, kinesic, and proxemic accompaniments of participants' speech behavior). Ultimately, misjudgement of speaker's or hearer's intent, or pragmatic failure will ensue (Gumperz 1982; Argyle 1967; Argyle, Furnham, & Graham 1981).

For example, in receiving the utterance, "Would you like another drink?" the learner must be able to interpret (1) the C2 situational context and (2) the speaker's illocutionary forces, as shown in his/her intonation and other nonverbal cues, if the learner is to appropriately infer if the "question" was:

(1) a genuine offer (an offer to provide the addressee another drink in that particular time and place.)

(2) an indirect directive: command (i.e. "I want for you, the addressee, to leave now")

(3) an indirective directive: suggestion (i.e. "The bar is closing, so let's go over to my place for another alcoholic beverage and whatever else might follow in that setting".)

Goffman (1974) hypothesizes that any utterance can be understood in numerous ways and that people make decisions about how to interpret a given utterance based on their definitions of what is happening at the time of the interaction; i.e., they define the interaction unfolding in terms of a frame or schema that is identifiable or familiar. One may infer, then, that L2 learners lacking appropriate C2 background knowledge may automatically rely on their own C1 schemata for the social situation at hand (e.g., knowledge about end-means or actor-goal relationships), and C1 interpretive strategies for their interpretations of the language and contextual cues received from the native L2C2 speaker during the interaction. If we consider that probably no more than 30 to 35 percent of the social meaning of a conversation of an interaction is carried by the words (Birdwhistle 1970:158) and that structural analyses of events of interpretive schemata have furnished proof that interpretation as well as social and linguistic rules for sentence use and meaning, are inextricably context-bound (Gumperz 1982; Bates 1981), and, that rules for usage and non verbal behavior are culturally relative, then a viable means of teaching to enhance the acquisition of L2C2 pragmatic competence may lie in sensitizing learners to socio-cultural (C2) meanings of speaker and situational contextual. Then what would be needed is a perception-oriented

teaching mode combined with relevant classroom practice, i.e., one in which the behavioral objectives would seek to:

1) make learners aware that L2 utterances in context often say much more that they literally mean.

2) make learners explicitly aware of the various levels of contest operating in the environment during any instance of spoken discourse and relevant C2 contextual cues.

3) encourage learners to consciously monitor the "cross-cultural context" (see Hall 1976) and the "given context" (see Van Dijk 1977) of the social environment in which the interaction takes place in order to perceive relevant C2 cues.

4) aid learners in acquiring the ability to assess the C2 contextual cues, to draw appropriate inferences as to speakers' intentions, and to respond without succumbing to
a) "pragmalinguistic failure" (assigning L1C1 force (motives) to utterances; or inappropriately transferring speech-act strategies from L1 to L2). Or,
b) "Sociopragmatic failure" (perceiving and interpreting L2C2 behavior through a C1 set of social conditions placed on language use (see Thomas 1983).

The two "types" of context mentioned in (3) above require further elaboration. What I shall call "cross-cultural context" refers to differences in cross-cultural pragmatic expectation concerning: the appropriate amount of given/new information (see Carrell 1984); distinctions between direct versus indirect speech acts; and implied versus predisposed or inherent information coded within an utterance (see Kasper 1984). Learners should be made aware that the L2 makes these distinctions, just as their L1 does, but perhaps not in the same way. Hall (1976:82) has identified a "culture continuum" on which he distinguishes between cultures according to the amount of contexting necessary to carry out activities in daily life. (HC), or "high-context cultures" are characterized by use of messages in which most of the information is either in the physical context, or internalized in the person, while very little information is in the coded, transmitted part of the message. (LC), or "low-context cultures" are just the opposite (i.e., they carry most of the information in the explicit code or language itself).

American culture, Hall claims, like many Western cultures, is at the lower end of this culture continuum, whereas Eastern cultures are primarily at the higher end. The distinction becomes especially important if speech participants are of cultures from differing ends of the continuum and if each speaker uses his or her habitual amount of "contexting" during a conversation. The LC (e.g., American) recipient may find the HC (e.g., Asian) speaker's message so vague, general, and abstract that it is incomprehensible. Consequently, the (LC) recipient's attempts to inference will most likely not reflect the intended illocutionary force. In the situation's reverse the (HC) recipient may fell that the (LC) speaker is talking down to him

or her, providing much more information that he or she needs (or wants) to know.

The second type of context, the "given context" of the social situation, is perhaps best discussed in relation to Van Dijk's (1977) context model for pragmatic analysis. According to Van Dijk, analysis of the "given context" is the most important step in pragmatic comprehension (Van Dijk 1977:217). Van Dijk uses a "topdown processing" analysis to arrive appropriately at the speaker's intentions through the identification of the following:

1) the general social context (formal versus informal; public versus private)

2) the specific social situation context (e.g., opening a formal meeting; introducing someone at a party)

3) the relevant factors in the given contest (e.g., the participants' positions (roles, status, etc.), properties (age, sex, etc.), relations (dominance, authority), and functions (judge, waitress, peer, etc.)

4) the conventions (social norms) pertaining to the given context, even though these may not be easily defined.

5) the overall ongoing action and the sequence of acts preceding the speech act under comprehension. This level would include the relevant nonverbal accompaniments of participants' speech (contextual cues) as prosodics, kinesics, etc.

The knowledge frames activated in each of the phases above allow hearers to generate increasingly more specific expectations as to the meaning of an incoming utterance or speech act. The outcome of the last phase is where the recipient matches the incoming contextual and lingustic cues against a speech act frame (see Kasper 1984).

An exploratory study by Kasper (1984) demonstrated empirically how L2 learners experience difficulty in comprehending indirect speech acts and phatic remarks. Her findings imply the importance of L2 learners becoming sensitized to C2 contextual cues which determine a communicative social interaction, according to the above variables identified by Van Dijk. Responsible for her L2 learner/subjects' pragmatic failures were the following inadequacies in L2/c2 situation processing:

1) failure to make use of illocution-indicating devices (e.g. syntactic, contextual andsituational cues).

2) problems in activating frames relevant in the given contest:

3) too little flexibility for frame shift if incoming data from speakers are utterances incompatible with a currently-activated, higher-order frame.

Still, exactly how speakers and hearers assign appropriate

illocutionary value to a speech act remains a topic for speculation among linguists, philosophers and ethnomethodologists. Some researchers have argued that there may be a universality in performing speech acts (especially for indirect speech acts) and for what Searle (1975) has referred to as 'speakers' inferential strategies for deriving illocutionaly force.' After comparing request strategies for 14 different languages, Fraser (1978) claimed that the same basic strategies were available in each language. And Carrel (1984), [after demonstrating that ESL learners, like native English speakers, in drawing two types of inferences (presuppositions and implications) consistently better comprehended implied meaning over presupposed meaning], has suggested that "the presupposition-assertion and presupposition-implication distinction may be a psychological universal in both first and second language processing." If all of this is correct, then Fraser is probably correct in claiming that "acquiring social competence in a new language does not involve substantially new concepts concerning how language is organized and what types of devices serve what social functions, but only new social attitudes about which strategies may be used appropriately in a given context" (Fraser 1978 in Schmidt & Richards 1980:139).

Arguing for the essentiality of mutual definition of context in native speakers' choice of surface structures for their speech acts, and hearers' choices of inferences which may be appropriately drawn, sociolinguists have claimed that social variables affect the possible speaker/hearer expectations and choices during an ongoing speech event. "Where knowledge of obligations and prohibitions is shared, simple interpretation rules allow prompt understanding" (Ervin -Tripp 1976)."

The views of those who argue most often that there exist cultural contrasts in pragmatic uses of speech and the views of those who claim the existence of speech act universals seem to hold one essential opinion in common. That is, that comprehension and performance of speech acts (whether it be in an L1 or L2) depend on culturally specific appropriateness criteria.

The obvious pedagogical implications are that L2 teachers must endeavor to teach the L2 in C2 context. Experiences must be provided which teach the norms for linguistic behavior in specific C2 contexts, which encourage the learner to focus on contextual variables and cues in operation during conversation and which exploit any universals in inferencing strategies.

The implications of considerations presented in this paper suggest that L2 learners need ample opportunities in the classroom to acquire and apply interpretive and productive context-analytical, and pragmatic skills through a variety of L2 tasks which emphasize that purpose. It is apparently still hypothetical, however, that deliberate classroom instruction and practice in contextual analysis of C2 social speech situations will increase the accessibility of pragmatic competence. Empirical studies are needed to investigate the real possibility of explicitly teaching such skills in the L2 class, and of the generalization of skills from the classroom to the

C2 environment. Furthermore, studies that quantitatively measure the rapidity of acquisition between experimental and control groups as well as any discernable long-term gains, would be profitable.

Suggestions for classroom exercises and role-play activities which seek to enhance learners' perception of, and monitoring of, contextual cues while providing an opportunity to produce "real life language," leading to enhancement of L2 pragmatic skills are listed below:

I. Exercises to Develop Perception and Monitoring.
(The exercises in this section are all original)

Exercise 1: Layers of Context.

In order to call learners' attention to relevant layers of context operating during speech interactions, students are presented with a copy of Van Dijk's (1977) context analysis model presented above and a short lecture concerning the ways in which contextual variables control and/or imbue meaning on spoken words to clarify them or give them meaning (see Goffman and Birdwhistle above). Students are next told that research shows a top-down processing of the type described above to be most productive. The efficacy of the model is indirectly demonstrated to students through the following sequence of activities:

(1) Learners watch a short video with the sound turned off, in which C2 natives are participating in a conversation on a topic relevant to the students' lives, such as apologizing for being late or declining an invitation.

(2) Students are asked to concentrate on the contextual aspects of the ongoing action; to identify speakers' kinesics and proxemics; and, to try to determine some of the higher order contextual aspects such as role relationships, status, topic of conversation, mood of speakers and the social situation at hand.

(3) The whole class discusses the tape focusing on and clarifying some of learners' perceptions.

(4) The film is played again twice, this time with the sound on, and learners are asked to evaluate their previous perceptions and make new ones if necessary.

(5) Comparisons of each set of perceptions are made.

Exercise 2: Linguistic and Contextual Ambiguity

A. In order to demonstrate the ambiguity of lines of discourse out of context the teacher writes a subtly ambiguous but conversational line of discourse on the board, such as "Would you like another drink?" discussed above. Learners, in this case, do not have access to any contextual cues other that those readily apparent in the explicit code. Learners are next asked to write down an appropriate

L2C2 situation context in which the line of discourse might have been spoken and to supply relevant details of contextual information (1) on all the participants who might have been present and (2) on the "ongoing situation."

The teacher collects and quickly reviews a few of the students' context scripts. Acting as an L2 "informant," the teacher discusses a few of the most appropriate contexts rendered by the learners and in particular why some "contexts" were plausible and why others were not (the teacher may decline to mention names of students whose work is being discussed in order to protect learners' egos).

B. The teacher orally presents (rather than writing on the board as in A) an ambiguous sentence before the class, thereby including more contextual cues, such as intonations, kinesics and proxemics. Such a sentence might be one which provides an opportunity to examine contrasting stress, such as, "Alice baked John a cake?" Students, working in small groups, again hypothesize socially appropriate contexts for the utterance and its meaning. A whole class discussion can follow, after which the teacher repeats the same ambiguous sentence but employs different paralanguage (e.g. "Alice baked John a cake?"; "Alice baked John a cake?"; "Alice baked John a cake?") and kinesics in order to alter the context and meaning of the utterance. Learners repeat the exercise and discuss how and why each utterance had differing illocutionary and perlocutionary force.

C. Learners working in dyads, 1) write a "context script" for the utterance, using Van Dijk's context analysis model, and (2) improvize a short, appropriate role-play dialogue which employs the supplied utterance.

Exercise 3: Situation/Setting & Ambiguity

The teacher lines up several large photographs or pictures on the chalkboard tray, then speaks an ambiguous line of discourse. Students are asked to identify the picture which portrays the most appropriate contest for the utterance, then they explain their choices, Other plausible, but less likely, choices would also be identified. The teacher may repeat this exercise several times, addding or subtracting photographs and employing various utterances.

This exercise may include two types of situation/setting ambiguity which I shall relate to Searles' (1979) concepts of (1) making words fit the world" (word-to-world-fit) and (2) making "the world fit one's words" (world-to word fit). The first type would include a rather situation bound ambiguity. In other words, a sentence would be presented in the exercise which would have as many meanings as situational contexts in which it could be appropriately employed. (e.g. the sentence "You're just in time!" might be presented with a picture of a host at a party speaking to a newly-arrived guest; a picture of an employee who has a lot of work in front of him speaking to a younger employee, and several others).

The second type could include situations and utterances where

style and formality help create the situational context, (including the relationship between the hearer and speakers and, where context dictates an utterance's syntactic form. For example, the teacher could present photographs which all involve one type of situation (e.g. one person is greeting another) and which all involve different role relationships between participants and settings. Next, the teacher would present an utterance which encodes, in an obvious way, a particular level of formality and deference (e.g. the informal greeting "Hi/what's new in your life?"). Students would most appropriately match the utterance to a picture displaying an informal situation or an encounter between peers.

Exercise 4: Direct Vs. Indirect Speech Acts: A Cultural Cloze Test

After a short discussion about the social uses of directness and indirectness in both the C2 and the learners' Cls, learners hear a tape of a short conversation between two C2 natives. The conversation should include both direct and indirect speech acts. Plausible situations might include an attempt at persuasion; a face-saving strategy and/or a rebuttal. Students listen carefully and are asked to identify speakers' utterances which appreared most direct, or indirect, to them and why. The context model presented above is introduced next. Students listen to the taped conversation again. This time they are listening for 1) contextual cues and 2) direct and indirect speech acts. With the teacher-informants' help, learners analyze and discuss the conversation until all speech and their contextual cues have been identified. The entire class should work together to "fill in" the unverbalized meanings.

An example of an appropriate scenario for this exercises taped conversation is the following:

> Student "A" visits student "B" in his dormitory room and asks to borrow "B's" lecture notes. "B" agrees. The participants next exchange a few more remarks, after which "A" remarks, "wow, they sure do keep it hot in here" "B" rises, opens a window, and the conversation continues. "A" and "B" exchange a few "pre-closing" conversational remarks. Just before leaving "A" asks "B", "Hey, how about some tennis on Sunday?" "B" replys, "Sorry, I've got a test Monday" "A" responds, "Hey, well good luck on it - maybe we can play some time next week." Both participants exchange closings and "A" leaves.

II. Role-Play Activities:

Role Play 1: Applied Linguistics Approach

Fraser, Rintell, & Walters (1980:81) claim that role-play in which the learner is asked to participate with the teacher on a one-on-one basis, within a more or less structured situation, is a viable means for assessing the L2 learner's pragmatic competence. It is important to note at this point that Role-play activities should never include assignment of roles alien to learners' needs and experiences. Role-playing should include: 1) roles the learners

assume in everyday life, and 2) roles of persons whom the learners are likely to encounter in everyday life. They further argue that "intuition" and observational methods alone are inadequate for making such assessments. Their method provides useful classroom practice as well.'' Learners are given many particulars of a context (e.g., status of participants, urgency of message; foregrounding for the conversation, etc._ and, a social situation to enact. Each social situtation is designed to elicit some particular speech act, while leaving the strategy for the performance of the act and/or the perception of and response to the speech act, up to the learner. The teacher can systematically vary certain parameters in the situation (e.g., age; sex of participant), believed to determine the speaker's choice of strategy for performing or responding to the speech act.

Role Plays 2 and 3 below are "clinical methods" derived from applied social psychology. Space limitations prevent full treatment of these methods here. Brief explanations are given and readers are referred to the sources listed for each method.

Role-Play 2: Social Skills Training

The Social Skills Training method (SST) is a highly-structured clinical method emphasizing much instruction and role-play. (SST) is commonly used by behavioral therapists to 1) teach perception and production of the "meaningful" non-verbal accompaniments of speech; 2) teach situation-appropriate language; 3) fine-tune learners' perception of speakers'moods, intentions, and reactions; 4) develop monitoring of the above; and 5) provide practice and feedback on performance of all of the above.

(SST) training manuals, which may be obtained from any university library, offer fully-detailed "lesson plans" which include analyses of social situations. Specifically, verbal and non-verbal behaviors necessary for particular social interactions are provided, along with explanations for why certain behaviors will invoke negative feedback from others. Homework assignments that encourage learners to practice and observe new social skills in the real world are included for each lesson. For more information, see Trower, Bryant, & Argyle (1978); Argyle (1979); Argyle, Furnham, & Graham (1981); L'Abate (1980).

(SST) Social Skills Training Class Outline

Clinical (SST) classes can observe the following training routine (from Trower et al, 1978)

1. Revision - Each session begins with a review of the points of the previous session, and a report from students on their successes and failures since the previous meeting (in actual L2C2 communication).

2. Description and Function of Skills to be taught - The teacher takes up a single theme such as some aspect of listening skills. The theme is then analyzed into a sequence of behavioral elements which serve as learning points which are written down and memorized. The

teacher then helps students understand how the skill sequence functions in ordinary, everyday interaction, the effect it produces on others and on the social life of the individual, and in particular, how it will help the students.

3. Demonstration - The trainer demonstrates the skill by (1) acting out a social interaction routine with a teacher's aid, or (2) by showing a video which does this.

4. Imitation - Students imitate (role-play) the skill in small groups, dyads, or one-on-one with the teacher. This can be taped.

5. Feedback - The trainer gives students feedback, including praise on the effects of their efforts. This may be done while playing the video of the students' performance. Feedback emphasizes effect rather than appearance or language errors alone.

6. Practice - From feedback comments, a few correction points are practiced in detail with continuous guidance from the teacher. Satisfactorily completed sequences are worked through again rapidly to speed up response reflexes.

7. Homework Assignments - These encourage students to put into practice the skills learned during the class session.

Role-Play 3: Sociodrama

Sociodrama offers a less-structured role play and discussion method designed to emphasize: 1) more learner practice in monitoring the contextual environment, and accurate perception of illocutionary force; 2) creativity and socio-metric choice through role-play; 3) whole-class discussion which includes reflection on pragmatic uses of language and learners' feelings about participating in various C2 contexts. A more detailed description of the method, techniques, and role-play situation suggestions may be found in Altshuler & Picon, 1980 and in Shearon, 1980.

An underlying principle of Sociodrama is sociometric choice and acting out rather than repressing frustations and maladaptive feelings and behaviours. Touchy real-life situations are often used for this kind of role-play. Techniques include "mirroring"; "doubling"; and "role--reversal."

EXAMPLE: The teacher fand teacher's aide dyad might first model or role-play a situation in which a student confronts his or her professor about a grade which the student deems unfair. In an ESL class, one teacher would play an American professor, and the other teacher (or an advanced ESL student) would play the part of the disgruntled ESL student. The scene would be played several times for the class: one time would be "the wrong way" e.g., the "ESL student: would use native Saudi Arabian paralanguage, kinesics, proximics, and assertiveness behaviors.

The teacher playing the part of the professor would demonstrate

during the role-play, some of the unexpected or unwanted reactions which the Saudi student might receive.

The class would discuss the scene with the teachers, then watch another role-play scene, which demonstrated appropriate L2C2 language and behaviors. After further class explanation, all students would choose a partner and perform their own role-plays.

In conclusion, both L2 teacher experience and current professional literature attest to the necessity of enhancing the pragmatic development of learners in the L2 classroom by promoting understanding of C2 contextual variables and relationships.

Though most of what has been presented in this paper has to do with spoken language, similar L2 students in a C2 context would also experience difficulty in comprehending and using many of the pragmatic uses of written language. This is a topic which requires further research.

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CHILD VS. ADULT IN SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION: SOME REFLECTIONS

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One of the more controversial issues in recent research on second language acquisition relates to the question of age, whether age confers an advantage or a disadvantage in the acquisition of a second language; whether the speed at which children acquire a second language is greater than that of adults; and whether the eventual level of attainment is higher for children than for adults. In other words, research has focussed mainly on the relationship between age, rate, and eventual attainment in second language acquisition. The current, popularly-accepted view is that youth has a distinct advantage in learning a second language. Though this popular belief finds considerable support from a large number of 'scientific' and professional studies, it is by no means an uncontested one.

It is my purpose in this paper to present a review of studies which deal with the problem of age in second language acquisition, and, where possible, comment on the relative strengths and weaknesses of the studies. I shall also give reasons for my agreement or disagreement with the conclusions of the studies that I have considered.

The ease and skill with which a child acquires a second language, individual differences notwithstanding, seldom leave an observer unimpressed. If the observer happens to be the parent, then the child's second language feats are often reported to be phenomenal. Parental evidence may perhaps be discounted on the grounds that "parental pride" may often magnify the real second language acquisition of a child (Snow:1983). However, Chomsky (1965) and other proponents of the transformational grammar school were so impressed by the child's ease of acquiring a second language that they could only explain the phenomenon in terms of a biologically-triggered behavior that can only occur at a definite point of development. According to this view, the child possesses a unique capacity for language (a "Language Acquisition Device" or LAD) that the adult no longer possesses, and it is this capacity that enables the child to learn faster and more effectively than the adult. This view, in which a child is seen as inhabiting a kind of linguistic Eden where language acquisition is natural, easy, and spontaneous, has been formalized into what is known as the "critical period" hypothesis (McLaughlin 1978).

Penfield (Penfield and Roberts 1959) discussed the acquisition of language from a physiological point of view and presented con-

siderable amount of anecdotal and impressionistic evidence that children under the age of nine acquire languages with greater facility than adults. Their simple argument is that the brain of a child is more flexible than that of an adult.

The behavioral evidence of the child's skill in acquiring languages - still mostly anecdotal and impressionistic - led Lenneberg to his classic work, Biological foundations of language (1967). Briefly, Lenneberg's assumption is that the acquisition of language is innately determined (somewhat like Chomsky's LAD) and that its acquisition is dependent upon both some necessary neurological factors and some unspecified minimum linguistic input. For Lenneberg, the critical period lasts from about age two to puberty; maturational factors make it virtually impossible to acquire language before the age of two, whereas the loss of cerebral plasticity cause by the completion of the development of cerebral dominance, or "lateralized specialization of the language function" makes language learning difficult after puberty.

To argue that the child acquires language easily and quickly during the critical period by capitalizing on the maturational processes is not necessarily a demonstration of the truth of the hypothesis. Therefore, the argument of speed and efficiency of acquisition presented by the Critical Period Hypothesis may be one that is based merely on anecdotal and impressionistic evidence, more a perception of a phenomenon unverified, or unverifiable, by empirical data. However, if a perception is common and compelling enough - I think that this one is - it cannot be cursorily dismissed and may point to complex processes involved in language learning, and to various other factors that contribute to the acquisition of a second language both among children and adults.

One reason which makes me uncomfortable with a neurological explanation of language acquisition is the absence of unanimity among its proponents as to the period of lateralization. For Lenneberg, lateralization is complete by puberty; for Krashen (1974) it is complete by the age of five; while for Kinsbourne (1979) and others it is complete by birth. Again, Seliger (1978) mentions studies that show that "infants with a mean age of 5.8 months have similar lateralized responses to both verbal and non-verbal stimuli as older children and adults" (74).

However, physiological explanations for phonological and morphological (inflexional) differences related to age are not without validity. Certainly, the Critical Period Hypothesis has been partially - though methodological difficulties are enormous - tested in studies of subjects who have been deprived of vital linguistic input during the critical maturation period. The most well-known study which puts a stamp of credibility on the Critical Period Hypothesis is the case of Genie (Fromkin, Krashen, Curtiss,

Rigler, and Rigler 1981). It may be interesting at this point to quote the authors of this study who confess that the "study of children reared under conditions of social and sensory deprivation represents a relatively inaccessible area of scientific research" (144).

Some of the more recent research on second language acquisition which focuses on age difference and difference in the degree of linguistic accomplishment are more relevant to our purposes here. There are observational studies and experimental studies in both natural environment and second and foreign language environment, based on actual diary studies and experiments with subjects of varied language background. Different foreign language tests and measures were used to ascertain the level of proficiency in a particular foreign language. Krashen, Long, and Scarcella (1979) made a review of these investigations and formulated a number of generalizations that are consistent with the results of recent research findings. For the sake of clarity, it would be better to use the language of the authors themselves:

> (1) Adults proceed through early stages of syntactic and morphological development faster than children(where time and exposure are held constant)
>
> (2) Older children acquire faster than younger children (again, in early stages of morphological and syntactic development where time and exposure are held constant)
>
> (3) Acquirers who begin natural exposure to second languages during childhood generally achieve higher second language proficiency than those beginning as adults.
>
> (Krashen, Long, Scarcella 1979:573)

The generalizations presented here are clearly contrary to the claims of the early sensitivity hypothesis that younger-is-better. What is important to note here is that a distinction is made between rate and eventual attainment; adults and older children learn a second language at a faster rate while children usually become superior in terms of ultimate attainment.

It would be tiresome and repetitious to consider in detail all the studies whose results contributed to the generalizations made above. Special mention may be made of the study by Snow and Hoefnagel-Hohle (1978). This study showed that while adults were superior to chidlren, they did not do better than the twelve to fifteen year olds. This result led Snow and Hoefnagel-Hohle to make the rather weak suggestion that the different sorts of linguistic experience the groups received affected the results of their study. The suggestion is clearly weak because the results of their study do

not strongly support their conclusion that older-is-better; but interestingly, the suggestion does indicate the importance of the varied nature of linguistic experience as a factor that ought to be considered in the assessment of linguistic competence.

Other studies that deserve mention are : Ervin-Tripp 1974; Ekstrand 1976; and Fathman 1976. All three studies demonstrate that older learners acquire a second language faster and better than younger learners. The results of Asher and Garcia (1969) also confirm the generalization that older-is-better in the rate of acquisition and have greater significance since they used carefully controlled input situations in which both older and younger learners received similar stimuli to the second language. Snow (1983) concludes from this that the "studies which are methodologically the best provide the strongest evidence for the superiority of older learners" (144).

There is, I think, scope for disagreement with this methodological question. If it is admitted that in spite of the varying degrees of difficulty involved in the acquisition of a second language, the process is a dynamic one, that it involves human beings and not rats, then the method of using carefully orchestrated input situations becomes unacceptable. It may be appropriate to examine enzymes and bacteria in tightly controlled situations, but to use such techniques indiscriminately in language-related experiments can often end up as exercises in linguistic pedantry.

The study of Neufeld which attempted to demonstrate that adults can acquire considerable phonological skill under certain controlled conditions also does not relate significantly to real language-acquisition situations. Snow (1983), however, feels that Neufeld has demonstrated

> in a very clever and ambitious study, that adults can achieve nativelike proficiency in pronunciation of a foreign language after about 18 hours of carefully programmed exposure to the language....Neufeld's study is very important in that it demonstrates that adults can achieve nativelike proficiency in pronunciation within a limited amount of time; it leaves open the question of why most adults learning a second language fail to do so.(144)

Perhaps most adults fail to do so because real-life learning does not give them "18 hours of carefully programmed exposure to the language." There is a lot of evidence that children excel in phonology and acquire a nativelike pronunciation of a second language, while adult language learners almost always retain a residue of foreign accent. According to Hatch (1983), pronunciation is an area where we continue to find differences with age. "I am

puzzled as to how to explain it. Intuitively, I buy the physiological explanations, rather than age-related factors, for this phenomenon" (197). Scovel (1969) provides convincing neurological arguments to explain why children are able to master the sound patterns of a second language with much greater ease than adults.

To sum up my position, I may state that while "older is better" in the rate of acquisition of morphology and syntax due to higher cognitive abilities, "younger is better" in pronunciation. However, the neurological explanation can only partially account for the child's superior ability in pronunciation.

Among other factors that can account for the difference in child-adult second language acquisition, motivation, attitude, and social-psychological distance are very important. I consider the last one particularly relevant in explaining the child's superiority in both phonology and eventual proficiency in second language acquisition. A child can integrate into the target language community more easily than an adult. Studies with immigrant families and their children have shown that a child is better able to cope with the new culture,people, and surroundings. While adults have been observed to suffer more from culture shock, culture stress, and language shock, children are invariably more venturesome, less self-conscious, more flexible and spontaneous. This could be explained in terms of "lowered inhibition, greater ego permeability, and greater emphatic capacity," to use some of Giora's (1972). It is the child's infantile characteristics that enable him to "partially and temporarily give up one's separateness of identity from the speakers of the target language" (Giora) that makes language learning and approximation to nativelike pronunciation easy. A child does not consciously have to practice to become one with the target language group; his ego development is not completed; the language boundaries of lexis,syntax, morphology, and phonology are also not very firm and hence permit greater permeability of the boundaries. His lowered inhibitions facilitate second language learning because, unlike an adult, "he is willing to use a word incorrectly and to form new expressions if necessary" (Schumann 1975:211).

Schumann's acculturation model presented briefly above has been questioned by many; Larsen-Freeman (1983) particularly questions Schumann's claim that "acculturation is <u>the</u> causal variable in second language acquisition" (7). Larsen-Freeman acknowledges the importance of affective variables in second language acquisition, but criticizes the exclusion of cognitive strategies from Schumann's model. "Social and psychological proximity may bring about exposure, but that's not the same as saying it causes L2 acquisition... Cognitive strategies do make a difference" (7). Though Schumann's affective variables are not so easily testable, they do have strong intuitive appeal.

The main thrust of some of the studies cited earlier in the paper (Snow and Hoefnagel-Hohle 1978; Asher and Garcia 1969; Ervin-Tripp 1974; Ekstrand 1976; and Fathman 1976) was to explode the popular myth that younger-is-better in second language acquisition and to demonstrate that older-is-better. Perhaps pragmatics and semantics can provide some explanation regarding the commonly preceived superiority of children in second language acquisition. Pragmatics

> deals with particular utterances in particular situations and is especially concerned with the various ways in which the many social contexts of language performance can influence interpretation. Pragmatics...looks at speech performance as primarily a social act ruled by various social conventions (Heatherington 1981:418).

Pragmatics can be compared to semantics which is concerned with the literal meaning of an utterance. Pragmatics clearly adds a dimension to the use of language which enhances our own understanding of the child's linguistic competence. By positing that the speech act is a social act bound by certain social conventions, pragmatics requires the existence of shared concerns and presuppositions between the speaker and the auditor.

Conversations between mothers and children become especially meaningful because of the mutuality involved in communication. In first language acquisition, semantics and pragmatics are discernible in as early as one and two-word utterance stages. Snow (1977), Keenan (1977), Peters (1977), and Scollon (1979) have all shown how a child approximates sentences and utterances of great complexity and length which become clear when correlated with a social setting and when used in referential context. These are not just words but sentences with full semantic components.

Similarly, in second language acquisition as well, children demonstrate what Hymes (1970) calls "communicative competence" even before they have mastered fully-developed grammatially-correct adult structures. This is one phenomenon that I noticed in my own son's acquisition of a second language. After going through the so-called "Silent Period" (this may account for the slower rate among child learners in the initial period) where the child internalizes the rules of the new language, the child displays competence in communicating effectively in social settings, namely school and playground. It is here, I think, that the conventional distinction between linguistic competence and communicative competence breaks down. There are, in Hymes' words, "rules of use without which the rules of grammar would be useless" (1970). A child makes full use of all the different rules of discourse and communiation incorporated in gestures, pauses, imitations, and intonations. One example of such use of communicative tactics to accomplish the various communicative goals is given below:

Paul: Oh-oh.

Jim: What?

Paul: This.(points to an ant)

Jim: It's an ant.

(Huang and Hatch 1970: 121)

The linguistic means at Paul's disposal are limited, but social context and accepted social conventions make communication possible. In contrast to the successful ways in which a child negotiates conversation, negotiation for the adults can be very difficult.

This probably explains why we expect less from children in terms of pure linguistic achievement. It has often been argues that communicative demands are greater for adults than for children, and that this difference in expectation points up the linguistic deficiencies of adults. As Snow has argues, "Adult second language speakers are forced into errors more severe and more striking than those typically made by children" (1983:147). This is probably quite true, but to make such comparisons to demonstrate the superior learning ability of adults is not relevant. The child does indeed inhabit a world that is less complex, different, and limited to the performance of social routines. Therefore, when a child utters memorized chunks such as "I'm fine," "Can I have some juice?" or "I want to watch TV," there is no need to underplay these linguistic expressions; they are relevant to the child's world and serve as effective means of communication.

In conclusion the question of age, rate, and eventual level of proficiency in second language acquisition is not one that can be easily resolved. I have attempted, within the limited scope of this paper, to consider some hypotheses and studies relevant to the topic. And if I have come any closer to a position on the question, it is probably a feeling that the child is the superior learner of a second language. Semantics and pragmatics, the scculturation model, and the critical period hypothesis have all contributed to different ways to reinforce this impression.

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